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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANBAR PROVINCIAL COUNCIL RECOMMENDS LEGAL ACTION
FOR ALLEGED THREATS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

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Classified By: PRT Anbar Team Leader James Soriano for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: The Anbar Provincial Council (PC) voted February 9 to recommend prosecuting two local figures, Hameed Al-Heiss and Sheikh Ali Hatim Suleiman, for allegedly threatening to use violence to loosen the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) grip on power in Anbar. PC Chairman Abdulsalam said Heiss had crossed a red line by advocating violence in a Baghdad television interview on February 6. The motion that passed recommended prosecution while opening discussions with Heiss. The PC also voted to seek clarification of a statement made by one of Prime Minister Maliki's aides who was present at the Heiss, television interview, and who told the press that the PM could use "emergency law" to "dissolve the Anbar Provincial Council." Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, the leader of the Iraq Awakening Movement, is distancing himself from Heiss. This gives Ahmad the advantage of taking the high ground while watching two local figures tear at the legitimacy of his political rivals in the IIP-dominated PC. End Summary.

Emergency Council Meeting

[1](#)3. (C) The Anbar Provincial Council voted in an emergency meeting February 9 to recommend prosecuting two prominent local figures, Hameed Farhan Al-Heiss and Sheikh Ali Hatim Abdul-Rizk Suleiman, for allegedly threatening the use of violence against members of the ruling IIP in Anbar. The decision to file a complaint was passed by 25 members of the IIP-dominated PC. A PC secretary announced that 40 of the 49-member PC attended. They were summoned by Chairman Abdulsalam Abdullah, who heads the IIP in the province. Heiss and Ali Hatim have long been critics of the IIP and its control of the Provincial Council. Until recently, both were deputies of the Awakening Movement of Iraq, or Sahawa Al-Iraq (SAI).

Threat of Violence

[1](#)4. (C) The Council meeting was in response to a February 6 television interview with al-Hurra TV station in which Heiss threatened to take up arms and drive the IIP from Anbar in 30 days if it did not relinquish power. Heiss alleged that the IIP was strengthening Al-Qaeda. "We will resort to going to the streets and will impose a curfew," Heiss said. "We will have to use force to get them out of Anbar Province. We will use weapons and treat them the way we treated Al-Qaeda. We are against the existence of the Islamic Party and its leaders and supporters in Anbar Province." Ali Hatim reportedly was not present at the time of Heiss, statement,

and there is no apparent record of his making a public utterance for the use of violence. Nonetheless, he telephoned an MNF-W interpreter on February 9, informing him that he stood by Heiss, comments.

Crossing a Red Line

¶15. (C) At the Council meeting, Abdulsalam roundly criticized Heiss, alleged threat, saying he had crossed a red line by directly advocating violence against the IIP, which had come to power legally through the election process. "We are responsible for protecting the citizens of Anbar," he told PC members. "We are also responsible for protecting the members of this Council. If anything happens to a member of this Council as a result of what Hameed Al Heiss said, we will have failed in our duty."

¶16. (C) Abdulsalam believes that Heiss crossed a red line. "Whatever our political differences, we need to avoid violence in politics," he told us on the margins of the Council meeting. Abdulsalam is genuinely concerned that Heiss, alleged threats could result in violence against some PC members.

¶17. (C) After the meeting, Abdulsalam emailed the PRT his correspondence to the Ramadi Investigative Court and to the Chief Prosecutor. In those documents, he lodged a complaint against both Heiss and Ali Hatim on behalf of the Provincial Council. He also emailed us a third letter addressed to the members of the Anbar Higher Committee) a consultative and conflict resolution body established in December) informing them of the PC's intention to take legal action (reftels).

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Provincial Council Hesitation

¶18. (C) Many PC members, including those from SAI, expressed support for a more cautious approach of behind-the-scenes discussions with Heiss with the aim of diffusing the situation. "We don't know why Hameed Al Heiss said these things," Sheikh Walid Khalid Arraq albu Ali Jassim, an SAI member and a self-described friend of Heiss, told the Council. "His comments might have been taken out of context. We need to talk with him and find out more." Nonetheless, Sheikh Walid condemned Heiss, apparent threat of violence. Claiming to speak on behalf of SAI leadership, Walid said that Sheikh Ahmad urged the Council to open discussions with Heiss. Other PC members agreed.

¶19. (C) When Abdulsalam asked for a vote on prosecution, only 18 members agreed and the motion failed. He then modified it to recommend prosecution while at the same time opening discussions with Heiss. That motion passed with 25 votes.

Heiss and the SAI

¶10. (C) Meanwhile, SAI leader Sheikh Ahmad told us February 9 that he deplores Hameed Al Heiss, utterances, adding that he recently wrote to PM Maliki urging his office to shun Heiss, requests for meetings, and affirming that Heiss does not speak for SAI. Heiss, relationship with both Ahmad, and his late brother, Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha, has long been rocky. Sattar was the co-founder with Heiss in 2006 of the Anbar Awakening Council, but he unilaterally abolished that organization last August ostensibly on grounds that Al-Qaeda had been defeated in Ramadi. In reality, however, Sattar was piqued that Heiss had days earlier approached Maliki with a proposal to fill the Tawafuq Cabinet vacancies. Sattar regarded Heiss, move as breaking ranks.

¶11. (C) When Ahmad took over the reins of SAI on the death of his brother last September, he sought to bring Heiss back

into the SAI fold by appointing him a sort of security advisor. By November that relationship foundered when Heiss and Ali Hatim made anti-Coalition statements in the press. That episode led to Ahmad's decision to break SAI's ties with Hameed Al Heiss and Ali Hatim.

What Does The PM Think?

¶12. (C) The PC also voted to pursue a meeting with Prime Minister Maliki over comments made by one of his advisers, Sami al-Askari, who accompanied Heiss during the February 6 television interview. According to Iraqi media reports, Al-Aaskari followed up Heiss, statements by adding that "emergency law authorizes Maliki to dissolve the Anbar Provincial Council." PC Chairman Abdulsalam denied that claim, saying that the PM did not in fact have this authority. "We need to ask the Prime Minister directly whether or not he thinks he has this power, and what he intends to do."

Comment

¶13. (C) The apparently overt threat of political violence is a new and dangerous development in Anbari politics. Heiss appears to be working his connections with PM Maliki to advance his political interest. The alleged threat of violence, combined with Sami al-Askari's statement, seems aimed at intimidating the IIP into some sort of power-sharing agreement with Heiss and Ali Hatim. If this is the case, Abdulsalam's legal complaint might be a message to the GOI that he is dealing with the situation in the courts and that there is no need for it to intervene. Meanwhile, SAI chief Sheikh Ahmad appears to be distancing himself from Heiss. Such a stance gives Ahmad the advantage of being able to take the high ground while watching two local political figures tear at the legitimacy of the IIP.

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